

## SCoPE Lesson SS100203 *Rail Activity*

### Part I

**Directions:** Please read the following passage before assembling into your groups. You will need to discuss the passage with your group members before making a final decision and answering the central question.

It is the year 1885, and you are a farmer in Anycity, Michigan living your life to its fullest. You have a daily routine. Beginning at sunrise you feed your livestock (cows, chickens, and such), tend to your crops, and finish your day at sunset by chopping wood for the family stove that heats your home for the night. You perform this procedure every day just as your father did when he was your age, and just as his father did.

One day you discover that the United States government is helping to finance a local corporation to run a railroad line from Detroit to Anycity. Immediately you think that this is a great idea. It would help you to ship your crops more cheaply and quicker from your hometown of Anycity to other places in the State of Michigan. You believe that you will make more money because of this. You support the effort to bring the railroad to Anycity by purchasing stock in the corporation that will build the railroad. By owning stock in the railroad company you will be assured profits for many years to come. You are even more pleased when you find out that the railroad line will end by “Old Man Crook’s” place. That is only about 2 miles from your farm.

Soon the railroad construction is completed and you, as well as other farmers in the area, begin to use the railroad lines to transport your goods to other cities in southeastern Michigan. You are amazed to discover that the railroad rates to transport your crops are so high that you and the other farmers barely make any profit from your shipped crops. However, because you are a shareholder in the railroad you receive a generous return on your stock investment as additional income each year. The people of Anycity begin to organize into groups to oppose the train rates. They ask for your help. They believe that you can persuade the railroad to lower its rates because you own shares in the company. The people also declare that if you are not successful they will ask their state representatives and senators to legislate (pass laws) to regulate the railroad shipping rates. What do you do?

If you work to lower the railroad shipping rates, you will not make as much money on your stock investment. However, if you do not try to lower the rates you will not only have to continue to pay high rates to ship your goods, but you will also lose support from your friends in the community. What do you do?

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### **Railroad Activity Part II**

Each student is to select and respond in writing to ONLY ONE of the following questions:

1. Should the railroads make profits for the owners and/or stockholders by charging as high shipping rates as they can? Why or why not?
- OR
2. Should the railroads function to serve the public interest by lowering their rates when the community believes they are too high? Why or why not?

Begin by identifying the question to which you have selected to write a response. Take a position on either side of the question. Develop a reasoned argument to support your position on the issue and present it in a persuasive manner. The response must include a minimum of seven sentences.

After you complete your individual written response the discussion group will meet again. Each student in the group will identify the question selected and explain and justify their response.